

STUDENT TEACHER AWARENESS OF MOOCS – MASSIVE ONLINE OPEN COURSES

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ABSTRACT

MOOCs are a relatively new trend in the Teaching Learning scenario which propagates and contributes in a major way to continuous Lifelong Learning. There are a number of courses being offered online but our students are not enrolling for the same. This study attempts to explore the reasons why students are not enrolling for these MOOCs. A self-designed, pretested Questionnaire was used to collect information about the B. Ed. student teachers Awareness to MOOCs which was divided into 3 parts- use of computers, use of Internet and awareness to MOOCs. A comparison was made among these three and it was found that student teachers were using You tube videos, online messaging tools such as email, blogging and Whatsapp groups, to learn things and clarify concepts. Use of Internet and online discussion tool for educational purpose was found to be very good among the student teachers. But, the study shows that the awareness of MOOCs is very low among the student teachers. The perceptions to MOOCs were mostly negative. However, if guided properly, they may start using MOOCs.

KEYWORDS: Awareness, Moocs, Online Learning & Perceptions

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INTRODUCTION

There have been great improvements in the delivery of education, especially with the advent of technology. Education has grown from traditional, regular classroom teaching to addition of distance education mode and now to online distance education thus, reaching more students in a more effective and efficient manner. There are many types, dimensions and aspects of distance education, however, the most recent and current one that is receiving immense attention worldwide comes in the form of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. MOOCs are the future in Education and a source of lifelong learning; it is the only way in which a person can keep abreast of the rapid changes that are taking place in every walk of life due to the advent of ICT. MOOCs are a relatively new trend in online education with similarities and differences to distance learning. A **massive open online course (MOOC)** is an online course which aims to provide unlimited participation to students and open access via the web. The materials provided include traditional course materials, filmed lectures, presentations, reading references, and assessment tools. MOOCs also provide interactive user forums to support community interactions among students, teachers and others.[1] MOOCs were first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of online, distance learning in 2012.[2]

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been receiving a great deal of coverage from the media, professionals in education and technologically savvy sections of the society. The key argument favoring MOOCs is that, it will provide free access, need based courses that could bring down the cost of university education. This

may potentially damage the existing models of higher education (HE). Elite universities have put up their courses online by setting up open learning platforms. edX, Coursera and Udacity are some examples of MOOCs, offering free online courses or charging a small fee for certification. A new Initiative Future learn, has been launched by the Open University in UK, to bring together a range of free, open, online courses from leading UK universities for learners around the world (Future learn, 2013).[3]

RELEVANCE

There are a number of courses being offered online but our students are not enrolling for the same. In this age of online learning students need to be motivated to adopt this as a major avenue of learning. This study attempts to explore the awareness, perceptions and the reasons why students are not enrolling for these MOOCs.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine the current college student's awareness concerning MOOCs.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

To study the awareness of the B. Ed. student teachers to MOOCs

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Students Teacher:

Students studying in a regular B. Ed. Course. **Awareness:** Knowledge about the concept, nature, tools of MOOCs and Feelings about 10 different aspects of MOOCs. (Access, Usability, Cost, Student Role, Teacher Role, Quality of Learning, Validity of course, Reliability of Course, Interaction and Resources. **MOOCs:** Massive Online Open Courses.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1:What is the Familiarity and Use of Computer, Smartphone's, Internet and Internet Facilities. RQ1:What is the awareness of the student teachers to basic Information about MOOCs? RQ3:What are the perceptions of college students about various aspects of MOOCs (Access, Usability, Cost, Student Role, Teacher Role, Quality of Learning, Validity of course, Reliability of Course, Interaction and Resources)?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research was conducted using survey method to gauge the awareness of student teachers towards MOOC programmes/courses. The target of the study was graduate and postgraduate student teacher pursuing B. Ed. And M. Ed. Course through regular mode and Urdu Medium. 70 graduate and 30 post graduate student teachers pursuing B. Ed. And M. Ed. Course through regular mode were randomly chosen to understand the Familiarity and Use of Computer, Smartphone's, Internet and Internet Facilities and extent of awareness about MOOCs. Out of these 100 student teachers, based on their Familiarity and Use of Computer, Smartphone's, Internet and Internet Facilities. awareness on MOOCs, 25 student teachers were shortlisted for interview to get in depth information about awareness of MOOCs. student teachers ranged in age from 21 to 28 of which 36 were girls and 64 were boys.

TOOL

The tool used was a self-designed, pretested and validated questionnaire to collect information about the B. Ed.

And M. Ed. student teachers Awareness of MOOCs. The tool comprised of three parts.

Part 1: Familiarity and Use of Computer, Smartphones, Internet and Internet Facilities.

Part 2: Awareness of the student teachers to basic Information about MOOCs.

Part 3: Perceptions towards the ten aspects of MOOCs. Access, Usability, Cost, Student Role, Teacher Role, Quality of Learning, Validity of course, Reliability of Course, Interaction and Resources. The questions in the questionnaire were both close ended and open ended testing student teacher's awareness and perceptions about MOOCs. The answers were then analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

FINDINGS

Part 1: Familiarity and use of Computer, Smartphone's, Internet and Internet Facilities

Initial information was gathered about familiarity and use of Computers, Smartphone's, and Internet access as it is a necessary precondition for MOOC.

Use of Computers: Learning to use computers shows varied answer of 1 year to 6 years. However, 80% learnt to use computers since 1- 3 years, and 20% student teachers learnt to use computers since 3- 6 years. 96% student teachers do not have computers. 4% student teachers have access to and are using computers daily. Use of Smart phones: 90 % of student teachers have smart phones and 10% student teachers have simple phones. Use of Internet: 90% of student teachers have access to Internet. 70% of the student teachers use internet for more than 30 hours per week. 20% use Internet for about 20 hours per week and 10% don't use Internet. An average of 30% of this time is spent for educational purposes. Use of Internet Facilities: 90% student teachers were using E-mails. 62% use blogs. 10% participate in discussion forums. 90% use Whatsapp groups to communicate with each other. 7% student teachers were using these Internet facilities few times a week. 83% student teachers were using it routinely- several times a weeks to daily.ie., using messaging or chatting tools such as email, text message, WhatsApp, or others. Internet Sites used for Educational purposes: 100% use Google Search to locate information on the Internet. 100% use Wikipedia to learn about things. 100% use You tube videos to learn things or clarify concepts. 80% use Slide share PowerPoint's to learn things or clarify concepts. This shows that the student teachers are very familiar with the use of Internet and its facilities for educational purposes and otherwise also.

Part 2: Awareness of the Student Teachers to Basic Information about MOOCs

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to find out the awareness of the student teachers to basic Information about MOOCs. The responses obtained were as follows: 92% student teachers knew the full form of MOOC. None of the student teachers could give the name of any MOOC. Only 2% of the student teachers have enrolled for MOOCs but they did not complete it. 92 % of the student teachers, were not aware/ did not know which type of courses are offered in MOOCs. The student teachers were divided about the time required to complete a MOOC. Student teachers were divided about certificate being given on completion of MOOCs. 83% student teachers say that fees will be charged for MOOCs. Only 2 student teachers had enrolled for an Online Course out of which none completed the course, the students dropped out because of lack of any compulsion/motivation to complete the course.

Part 3: Perceptions of MOOCs towards the Ten Aspects

The student teachers were interviewed in order to understand their perceptions about the ten aspects of MOOCs. Access, Usability, Cost, Student Role, Teacher Role, Quality of Learning, Validity of course, Reliability of Course,

Interaction and Resources.

Access

100% student teachers feel that the process of enrolment in MOOCs is complicated.. Most student teachers feel that access to MOOCs is dependent on a strong Internet connection which may not be available at all times. Most student teachers feel that as computers are required for MOOCs they will not be able to enroll for MOOCs.

Usability

Only 2 student teachers viewed MOOCs, as a learning tool that could help them or aid them in the B. Ed./M. Ed. course they are currently pursuing. Instead, 98% student teachers appear to view MOOCs as a different type of course that would require extra time and money rather than as a tool to assist them in their current course.

Cost

All the student teachers feel that MOOCs will be expensive in terms of Fees and also high speed Internet is required which will be costly.

Students Role

100% student teachers feel that a student is an active learner and the responsibility of learning lies with the student.

Teachers Role

100% student teachers feel that a teacher is not required in MOOCs. 100% student teachers feel that teacher guidance will not be provided in MOOCs.

Quality of Learning

75% of the student teachers felt that the quality of learning will be better in a traditional Environment than in a MOOC.

Validity of the Course

80% of the student teachers feel that the MOOCs courses do not have any recognition.

Reliability

80% student teachers feel the information available through MOOCs, is of the same quality as the information they receive from a teacher in a formally structured, traditional course.

Interaction

80% student teachers feel the interaction available in MOOCs is limited in comparison to the interaction available as an enrolled student in a traditional face to face course.

Resources

100% student teachers feel that MOOCs courses comprise only of Videos and PPTs. As resources which are also available otherwise on the Internet.

CONCLUSIONS

Part 1: Familiarity and use of Computer, Smartphone's, Internet and Internet Facilities

The familiarity to and use of computers is less among the student teachers. The use of smart phones is very good. The student teachers were using Internet regularly and were very familiar with the use of Internet and Internet Facilities. Internet was also being used for educational purposes. The student teachers were using messaging and chatting tools such as email, text message, WhatsApp, or others. Student teachers were using Google Search to locate information on the Internet, Wikipedia to learn about things, YouTube videos and Slide share PowerPoint's to learn things or clarify concepts. Thus it can be said that the necessary preconditions for use of MOOCs was there among the student teachers.

Part 2: Awareness of the Student Teachers to Basic Information about MOOCs

The awareness of the student teachers to basic information about MOOCs was very poor, though the student teachers knew the full form of MOOCs all other information or knowledge of MOOCs such as enrollment procedure, fees charged, type of courses, duration of courses and certification procedure was wrong.

Part 3: Awareness towards the Ten Aspects of of MOOCs

The student teachers awareness about the ten aspects of MOOCs. Access, Usability, Cost, Student Role, Teacher Role, Quality of Learning, Validity of course, Reliability of Course, Interaction and Resources was very low and the student teachers demonstrated misconceptions about all the ten aspects studied about MOOCs. The student teachers felt that the access process of MOOCs is complicated. Usability of MOOCs is not very good. MOOCs will be expensive in terms of cost. Student's role is active and the responsibility of learning lies with the student teacher which was perceived as a problem. Regarding Teachers role the student teachers felt that a teacher is not required in MOOCs and teacher guidance will not be provided in MOOCs. The student teachers felt that the quality of learning will be better in a traditional Environment than in a MOOC. The student teachers also expressed concern that the MOOCs courses do not have any recognition. They also felt that the information available through MOOCs is of the same quality as the information they receive from a teacher in a formally structured, traditional course. The student teachers reacted that the interaction available in MOOCs is limited in comparison to the interaction available as an enrolled student in a traditional face to face course. They also perceived that MOOCs courses comprise only of Videos and PPTs. as resources. Though the student teachers are not familiar with MOOCs, they have a lot of wrong perceptions concerning various aspects of MOOCs. Thus it can be finally concluded that the student teachers overall awareness of MOOCs is very poor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The student teacher awareness identified here sheds light on the current scenario regarding MOOCs. This could lead to a increase in the effectiveness of efforts to popularize MOOCs. The student teacher awareness of MOOCs are very low, however, if guided properly, they may start using MOOCs for self-directed learning. A MOOCs awareness drive is required in order to remove the misconceptions about MOOCs thus motivating students towards MOOCs and in turn increasing the use of MOOCs.

MOOCs have the ability to reach thousands of learners irrespective of location. MOOCs enable the students to increase their thinking abilities and motivation towards learning by offering opportunities to connect and interact with a large and diverse class. Challenges' with rate of completion, availability of technology, relevant support systems and quality of instruction obstruct the implementation of MOOCs. Students demonstrate both positive and negative

perceptions along with different benefits and challenges. The implications of MOOCs in education and training must be seriously addressed. Students can use MOOCs to enhance and enrich skills to prepare for an upcoming course and also cater to the possibility of completing continuing education requirements. Ultimately, MOOCs have the potential to engage individuals as lifelong learners.

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